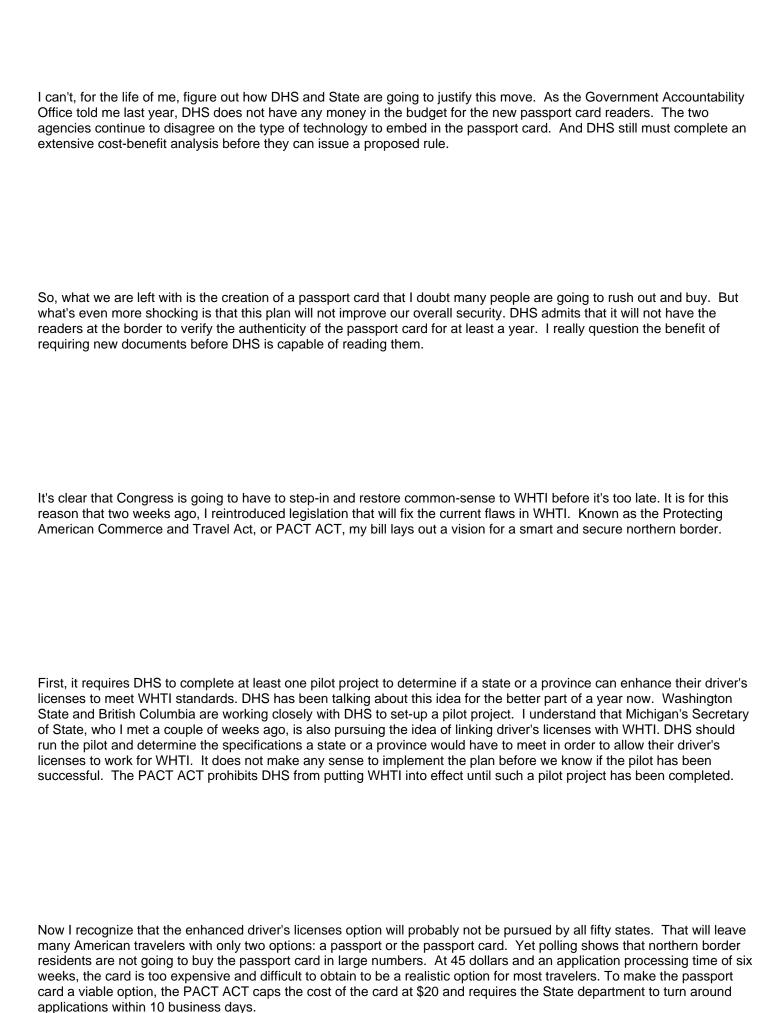
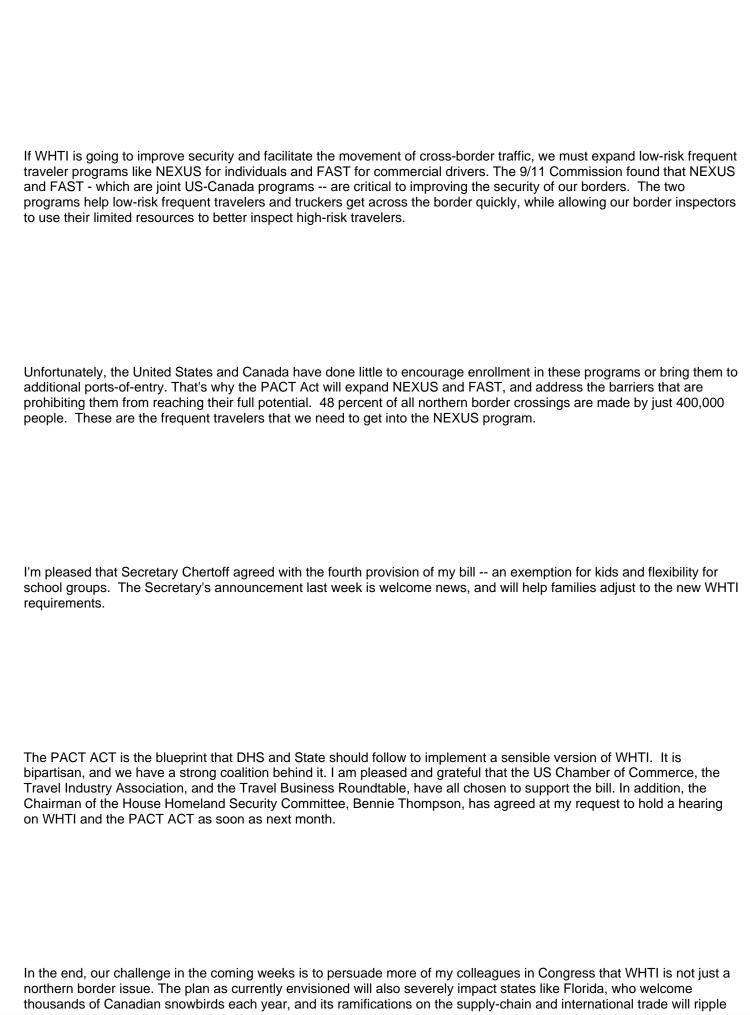
February 27, 2007 - Rep. Slaughter Meets with Canadian Premiers on Need for WHTI Reforms
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, February 27, 2007
Rep. Slaughter Meets with Canadian Premiers on Need for WHTI Reforms Bi-Partisan PACT Act Receives Bi-National Support from U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Canadian Officials
Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, today met with Michael Wilson, Canadian Ambassador to the US; Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario; Shawn Graham, Premier of New Brunswick; and Gary Doer, Premier of Manitoba to discuss fixing the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.
Also discussed was the Protecting American Commerce and Travel Act, or PACT Act, authored by Rep. Slaughter and Rep. John McHugh. The bill, which the Congresswoman recently reintroduced for the second time to the House of Representatives, is designed to ensure that WHTI will not unintentionally freeze trade and tourism with Canada. A strong coalition of travel and business groups have endorsed the bill, including the US Chamber of Commerce, the Travel Industry Association of America, the Travel Business Roundtable, and the Binational Tourism Alliance.
After the meeting, Rep. Slaughter delivered a major policy speech at the US Chamber of Commerce Leader's Luncheon on WHTI, during which she outlined the need to reform the plan and explained how her PACT Act would achieve that goal.

"WHTI is a looming crisis that has the potential to greatly harm the strong and mutually-beneficial relationship America has long shared with Canada," Rep. Slaughter said. "We must do all we can to prevent this crisis from reaching the breaking point. We can have a smart and secure shared border, but only if the Departments of Homeland Security and State take a step-back and realize that their current plan will devastate cross border travel and trade."
"Unfortunately, DHS and State are still moving forward with their deeply flawed plan, and so Congress must force them back to the drawing board," Rep. Slaughter continued. "The PACT Act I recently reintroduced in the House of Representatives should serve as the blueprint for WHTI reform. The Premiers and I remain optimistic that the ideas contained in it are gaining momentum."
In an announcement last week, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff officially agreed to exempt children 15 and younger from the requirements of WHTI. Rep. Slaughter had been calling for this exemption since last May. In addition, the Chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, Rep. Bennie Thompson, has agreed to hold a hearing on both the PACT Act and WHTI as soon as next month.
Background on the PACT Act and the full text of Rep. Slaughter's Keynote Address are attached below:
Background on the PACT Act
- § Title: The Protecting American Commerce and Travel Act - § Introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on February 14 by Rep. Louise Slaughter, along with bipartisan co-
sponsorship from Representatives McHugh (R-NY), Peterson (D-MN), and Manzullo (R-IL).

- § Has the support of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Travel Industry Association, and the Travel Business Roundtable.
- § Requires that DHS complete at least one pilot project to determine if a state may enhance their driver's license to meet WHTI standards. DHS is prohibited from issuing a Final Rule on WHTI until the pilot project is complete.
- o DHS has agreed to conduct an enhanced driver's license pilot project in Washington state, but they maintain that WHTI will be implemented by January 2008 - long before the pilot project has been completed.
- § Exempts US/Canadian children 16 and younger from the WHTI documentary requirements, and encourages flexibilit for school groups. Last Thursday, Secretary Chertoff responded to Rep. Slaughter's bill and announced an exemption fo children age 15 and under.
- § Sets the cost of the PASS card at \$20 for the first year of issuance in order to encourage early compliance. An applicant must receive the card within 10 business days after the State Department has received the application.
- § Expands and improves frequent traveler programs for low-risk travelers (NEXUS) and commercial drivers (FAST).
- § Requires DHS/State to develop and implement a WHTI public promotion campaign.

- § Requires DHS/State to complete a cost-benefit analysis of their final WHTI plan before implementation.
Rep. Slaughter's Keynote Address (as prepared)
Thank you, Ron, for that kind introduction. I am pleased to be here this afternoon to kick-off the Leader's luncheon on the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. I want to thank the Chamber for hosting us, and the Travel Industry Association and the Travel Business Roundtable for cosponsoring this important event. In a moment, I'll turn the floor over to our distinguished guests from Canada, Premier McGuinty, Premier Graham, and Premier Doer.
Earlier this morning, the Premiers and I had a productive discussion regarding the challenges confronting our shared border and what we need to do to solve them. We all agreed that WHTI has many flaws, and in its current form has the potential to harm the strong and mutually-beneficial relationship the United States has long shared with Canada.
We recognize that the US-Canada border is a vital channel for travel and commerce, and that Canada and the United States are both each other's largest trade and tourism partner. It is simply vital that our border policies take into account the fact that our economies are so closely intertwined and inter-dependent.
But I am afraid that DHS and the State department have lost sight of this special friendship. They are moving forward with a WHTI policy that will freeze that relationship while doing little to improve our overall security. Making matters worse, we have a limited amount of time to fix WHTI. In a rush to cross off another item from their checklist, the Administration wants to implement WHTI at the land borders by January 2008.





across the US economy.
We must also make it clear that the Administration's current proposal does little to improve border security. We need to stress that even former members of the 9/11 Commission, such as Senator Slade Gorton, have stated that WHTI does not match the commission's recommendations and will unintentionally hurt the economies of both the United States and Canada.
None of us are against the intent of WHTI, but we need to be smart about it. We cannot simply flip a switch and move from having the world's largest open-border to requiring expensive new crossing documentation overnight.
Today's luncheon is another positive step in the right direction. Together, I am confident we will succeed in producing real solutions for WHTI, solutions that will keep the US-Canada friendship strong and our borders open for business. Again, thank you to the Chamber and TIA and TBR for inviting me to speak with you today. Please know that I will continue to do doing everything in my power to advance smart and secure northern border polices. Thank you.
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